Satellites

In this city, the skies never lie:
that twinkling you see up there
is all just satellites.

We've known this since we were seven,
first taught that wishing stars
only existed in movies, reserved for
pretty blonde kids with talking puppies
who lived in white picket-fence houses
generally located in the palm of Walt Disney.

They taught us instead to wish upon satellites.

Maybe that's how you ended up in a job
you never knew existed: no child
could have wished for a title
that complicated, especially not one
that includes the words
'audit' and 'assistant'.

This city's skies get lower
as we grow taller,
draw us closer together.
I think there's a formula.

I think it starts when we're 12:
your Mum shows you a pack of contraceptive pills
saying, *don't ever let me see these in my house*.

At 16, you realise what she really meant was,
when you have sex at your boyfriend's that very first time,
remember to tell her you're staying at mine.

I think it started when we started to understand
that it would take two pairs of hands to protect
ourselves when the satellites came down
hard upon us.

Then we're scurrying around the rubble
pretending we can't be found, getting lost
in halos of midnight streetlamps,
getting action in school stairwells
but only ever feeling like sinners
when we were late for family dinners.

See, in this city, the skies never lie.
They just practise selective truth-telling.

For your grandma has a heart condition:
when she offers to set you up with the pastor's son,
it's best not to mention your college reputation
or that thing with that guy who got you
into auto-erotic-asphyxiation.

This city wants us
acting our age now–
getting careers and fiancés.

So I escaped to some other city,
somewhere out of sight,
to find out what all the streets
we read about in those books
we hid under our beds
realy looked like, leaving you

to find distraction on fire escapes
on you lunch breaks, with that song
-writer kid you no longer kiss,
who for you, shoplifts condoms
and digs his fingers into you
when he comes.

You've learnt to be realistic now,
learnt to barter to get what you want:
trading touch for meaning
trading meaning for sex
trading sex for some pirated
Blu-Ray, high-definition
version of love, without all the risk
of your heart getting mauled.

Good sex can lead you to believe anything,
but best sex always helps you forget everything.

Except for the time when they taught us
that there were no stars left,
told us, *keep your head down*,
put your faith in satellites instead.

They warned us about the drug-takers,
the failures, the smokers, mini-skirt wearers,
class-skippers, school drop-outers, the ones
who got pregnant. They failed to mention
the myth-makers, risk-takers, mid-morning tokers,
mid-climax hair pullers,

and the poetry of post-coital tobacco
smoke against clear night skies
on the rooftops of shopping centres.

But in the morning, you'll remember
that the only love you'll ever require
will be found in yourself,
and in our voices on the phone later.

In every city, the skies never lie:
here in London, the traffic fumes
will erase the stars again tonight.

So let's wish upon one more
satellite, the one delivering
my words to your ear
over three oceans, two continents
and just one tiny skip over
a tiny sliver of the Milky Way.

For we are this city —
from its love hotels,
its fire escape stairwells,
to its blurry gay bars.
And we still have these streets
tonight: I think if you just tilt
them right, there's still a bit
of adventure left.

I still know you
and we're both not rich
or married yet,
and I think this means
that we're not too old to start dreaming.